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July 26, 2000

VIA FACSIMILE: (202) 565-7936

ORIGINAL BY U.S. MAIL

The Honorable Richard J. Griffin
Inspector General
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
810 Vermont Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Inspector General Griffin:

During the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs, Housing and Urban Development and Independent Agencies (Senate VA/HUD Subcommittee) hearing on appropriations for FY2001 in April, I posed a series of questions to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA/Department) about the VA's Community Nursing Home (CNH) evaluation and inspection program. The purpose of this letter is to request that the Office of Inspector General conduct a comprehensive review evaluating the VA's CNH oversight evaluation and inspection program.

The CNH program places veterans in private nursing homes when they cannot be placed in a VA-operated nursing facility. Indeed, the VA contracts with 27 percent of nursing homes in the United States. The VA conducts its own evaluation of nursing homes to insure that our nation's elderly veterans receive the quality of care they so richly deserve. The VA requires annual evaluation of CNHs and monthly follow-up services. It seems to me that the VA's evaluation and follow-up services, which ensure the care of veterans, would be helpful to the other elderly residents in these nursing homes.

I believe it is important that the VA, which already utilizes HCFA and state agency information in their evaluations of nursing homes for veterans, should likewise share their evaluations and observations — it seems to make sense that this information should be compiled, readily available in centralized database and shared between federal and state nursing home regulators. Every effort should be made to coordinate the oversight efforts of all federal and state regulatory agencies responsible for our frail elderly in nursing homes. Coordination between the VA, HCFA and the states would enhance and encourage rigorous monitoring of problem nursing homes.

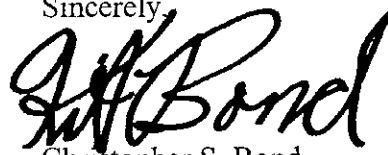
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With that goal in mind, a comprehensive review by the OIG would aid in determining how the VA's oversight evaluation and inspection process for its CNH program presently operates. Please conduct a review to evaluate whether: (1) the VA is meeting its monitoring and reporting responsibilities under the VA's CNH evaluation and inspection program; (2) coordination between the regulatory VA and HCFA occurs under the existing inspection program; (3) how CNH evaluation and inspection information is compiled currently and whether it is readily available in centralized database; and other matters as needed.

If you or your staff have any questions regarding this matter, please do not hesitate to contact Dan Donovan at (202) 224-5175. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Bond", written in a cursive style.

Christopher S. Bond
Chairman